IMPROVING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM PLANNING AND OPERATIONS: CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCILS

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## Table of Contents

**IMPROVING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM PLANNING AND OPERATIONS: CHALLENGES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCILS** ................................................................. 4

- Substantive Challenges ........................................................................................................ 5
- Fiscal Challenges ................................................................................................................ 6
- Internal Structural and Operational Challenges for CJCCs .................................................. 8
  1. Establishing a clear mission and role. ............................................................................. 9
  2. Developing a viable council structure. .......................................................................... 10
  3. Developing and using staff capabilities to support CJCC planning and policy development. .......... 11
  4. Acquiring and using information about system operations ........................................ 12
  5. Fostering use of evidence-based practices in on-going operations. .......................... 14
  6. Catalyzing plans for system operations in the event of emergency. ............................. 15
  7. Developing the capacity to shape budgeting and resource allocation decisions in a neutral and credible fashion ........................................................................................................ 16

**A National Network for Information Exchange** ............................................................... 16
Local jurisdictions across the country face significant challenges in criminal justice. As states, counties, and cities try to come to grips with significant budget deficits, local-level courts and criminal justice agencies are being forced to slash their budgets and furlough or lay off personnel. There is a strong need for sound local level policies and practices that enable effective use of limited justice system resources, and there are major challenges that must be overcome if public moneys are to be used wisely and effectively in reducing crime and addressing persistent criminal justice issues.

In many cities and counties, a primary vehicle for addressing criminal justice issues is through a multi-disciplinary council or commission that includes key leaders from the institutions and agencies involved in criminal justice policy-making and implementation. A myriad of councils and commissions of this kind exist across the United States. They have different names (most commonly “criminal justice coordinating council” [“CJCC”]), their membership rosters vary, they have widely varying staff capabilities, and their missions are somewhat diverse. At a minimum, they seek to improve communications among the leaders of the organizations and institutions directly involved in criminal justice planning and operations—principally law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ offices, indigent defense agencies, courts, jails, and probation and corrections departments.

Some of these criminal justice coordinating councils or commissions define their responsibilities more broadly, working to develop and maintain a local-level capacity for systemic thinking and acting with respect to criminal justice issues. Their starting place remains the same as the councils with more limited objectives: a base of good communications among court and agency leaders, and generally also with public officials such as county executives and budget managers. However, these more ambitious councils, through their leadership and core staff, are integrally involved in collection and analysis of data about criminal justice system operations, identification of persistent and emerging problems, development of plans to address the problems, and formulation of budgetary strategies.

Robert Cushman, in a valuable guidebook, has summarized the potential benefits of effectively functioning CJCCs:

“better understanding of crime and criminal justice problems, greater cooperation among agencies and units of local government, clearer objectives and priorities, more effective resource allocation, and better quality criminal justice programs.”

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This paper draws on Cushman’s seminal work and on discussions with leaders of a dozen leading such criminal justice coordinating councils in outlining key challenges that local governments and their CJCCs face in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Our focus in this paper is principally on county-level CJCCs, because county boundaries are most likely to encompass a local criminal justice system—including municipal police departments, county sheriffs’ departments, courts, prosecutors’ offices, public defender agencies, and probation and community corrections departments.

Substantive Challenges

The specific types of crime and criminal justice problems that local governments face vary considerably across the country, but there are some issues that seem to be prevalent in many communities. From a public safety/crime control perspective, these typically include robberies, assaults, residential and commercial burglaries, auto theft, petty thefts from stores, drug possession and dealing, driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, gang violence, and domestic violence.

From a somewhat broader societal impact perspective, the problems include not only specific types of crime but also issues such as:

- stagnant or decreasing funding for agency operations and programs
- disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic minorities arrested and jailed;
- crowding in jails and juvenile detention facilities;
- continuing problems with substance abusing and mentally ill offenders (often chronic offenders who commit relatively minor offenses);
- ineffective and often counter-productive bail and pretrial release policies;
- lack of preparedness for emergencies arising from a natural or man-made disaster;
- delays (sometimes lengthy) in resolving cases against persons arrested for crime;
- management of prison and community corrections populations, including ways to handle violation of probation conditions;
- attention to the needs and interests of crime victims;
- acquisition and sharing of information using modern information and communication technologies; and
- perceived need for overall system improvement, including incorporation of practices shown to be most effective in reducing recidivist behaviors and enhancing overall system efficiency and effectiveness.
The crime control problems persist despite the fact that crime statistics compiled by the FBI from local law enforcement agencies indicate that crime has generally been decreasing in most places in the United States for the past several years. Although statistics on reported crime have dropped, criminal behavior remains an on-going concern. The justice system management/societal impact problems have begun to gain greater attention in recent years, as communities across the country have increasingly come to realize that traditional ways of conducting justice system operations can be substantially improved—not only helping to minimize criminal behavior but also producing fairer and more reliable processes, often at lower costs.

Ironically, as local criminal justice systems develop capacity to deal with underlying problems such as substance abuse and mental illness that contribute to criminal behavior, there have been increasing pressures on justice system institutions and agencies to take on more and more responsibility for addressing problems that other societal institutions have not been able to manage successfully. The challenge of meeting these increased responsibilities puts increased pressure on the core justice system institutions to work collaboratively with non-traditional partners such as health care providers and community groups. The pressures are heightened by the fiscal crunch now facing many localities.

Well-functioning criminal justice coordinating councils can be vitally important resources for local governments as they seek to fulfill their mandates to assure public safety and fair treatment of all, while coping with reduced budgets. The councils can provide a forum for identifying issues and, depending on their structure and role in county or city government, can be instrumental in setting priorities, allocating resources, and planning to address key systemic issues. To be successful in such efforts, however, the councils must be able to cope with the fiscal challenges and internal structural and operational issues discussed in the next sections of this paper.

Fiscal Challenges

The substantive challenges are exacerbated by an array of fiscal challenges. Since the Fall of 2008, the U.S. has been in a deep economic recession that has led to acute budget problems at every level of government. States and local governments are struggling to balance their budgets in the current economic environment. For example, many states, such as Oregon and California, are suffering from budget shortfalls in the billions of dollars, resulting in proposals to reduce court operations, mass-release prisoners, divert prisoners who would previously have served relatively short state prison sentences to county jails, and even close prisons. State budget shortfalls and the resultant cuts in state-funded criminal justice agencies put an increasing burden on counties and cities to provide more services on their own limited budgets. Moreover, the budget cutting process has meant reductions in a broad range of areas including the budgets of other agencies that provide services needed by the justice system, such as treatment for substance abuse and mental illness.
At the local level, the problems posed by shrinking agency budgets are often compounded by state-level policies that push requirements for service delivery down to the county and city level in order to reduce state agency budgets. For example, budget reductions in state mental health services has resulted in greater demands being placed on local jails and county/city-based service providers to address the mental health issues that underlie many offenders’ criminal behavior. In addition, state funding of courts, and specialty courts in particular, are often among the first to be cut, resulting in fewer alternatives and treatment options for special populations, leaving the local justice agencies with the responsibility for addressing these populations, usually through the costly traditional justice process. Finally, cuts and furloughs in staff among state-funded justice practitioners places a greater burden on locally-funded components of the justice system—lengthening case processing times or increasing average lengths of stay for pretrial defendants, for example.

Perhaps the most serious long-term fiscal challenges stem from the ways in which the institutions and agencies involved in criminal justice are organized and funded and from the ways in which budgetary processes work at every level of government. Criminal justice is fundamentally a local-level function, mainly involving municipal and county-level agencies. Even when some elements of the system are state-funded, key officials including judges and prosecutors are generally elected or appointed locally—most often on a county basis. County commissions and city councils are locally elected, jails are almost always funded by a city or county, and law enforcement is typically a municipal or county function. The judges and elected officials (and many appointed officials) are independent and not subservient to a coordinating council. One key challenge is to gain their recognition of the interdependent nature of justice system operations and the benefits of collaborative planning and problem-solving.

Funding for criminal justice is fragmented, typically coming from multiple sources in patterns that vary considerably from state to state. It is common for courts and probation departments to be mainly (or wholly) state-funded, and in some states prosecutors’ offices and indigent defense agencies have substantial state-level funding support. Federal and foundation grant funding—outside the usual state or local appropriations process—adds another wrinkle: grant-supported initiatives, if successful, ultimately require local- or state-level assumption of courts in order to be sustained. At a minimum, two levels of government are involved, and often there are four levels—city, county, state, and federal. All three branches of government have significant roles, and in many instances private sector entities are also involved.

At both the state and local levels, budgets are typically organized (and appropriations made) on an agency-specific—“silo”—basis. All too often, agency and court budgets are developed without sufficient information about the ways in which the different components of the system interact. Funding authorities
frequently have little sense of how budgetary support or policy mandates directed toward the actions of one entity can affect the operation of others and the overall performance of the justice system. It is not uncommon for a policy initiative on the part of one level of government to have significant repercussions on operations funded by a different level. A program to add more police officers to municipal police forces, for example, is likely to result in more arrests, which has ripple effects on the operations and resource needs of prosecutors’ offices, indigent defense agencies, the courts, probation, and state and local corrections agencies.

A key threshold challenge for criminal justice coordinating councils is to develop a base of knowledge about the funding streams that support the activities of all of a jurisdiction’s entities that are involved in criminal justice processes and about the specific functions that each funding stream supports. As is the case in many jurisdictions, council subcommittees are often created to tackle certain issues. In jurisdictions such as Louisville, Kentucky, the Louisville Metro Criminal Justice Commission maintains a mixture of agencies within each issue-based subcommittee in order to break the silos. This is not easy to do even with respect to the traditional justice system entities—police, prosecutors’ offices, defender agencies, courts, probation, and corrections. It is likely to be even more challenging to develop good knowledge about funding streams that support agencies that are not conventionally regarded as within the justice system but that conduct programs and activities which are integrally related to the operations of courts and criminal justice agencies.

Thus, for example, funding for treatment of substance abuse and mental illness—basically public health functions—are vitally important for the effective operation of a number of criminal justice system improvement initiatives aimed at reducing recidivist criminal behavior. Similarly, funding to provide housing for homeless people—a housing or public welfare function—can significantly impact the success of justice system initiatives aimed at addressing problems posed by chronic minor offenders.

Internal Structural and Operational Challenges for CJCCs

At least potentially, criminal justice coordinating councils can help counties and cities to overcome the tendencies toward silo funding and enable them to make more effective use of the limited resources available for activities directly or indirectly related to criminal justice. However, there are significant issues that have to be addressed in order to develop an effectively functioning CJCC. Of particular note, it is important to recognize at the outset that the goals and values of the organizations that are directly involved in criminal justice operations are not co-extensive and to some extent are in conflict with one another. An obvious example is the conflicting goals and values of prosecutors’ offices and public defender agencies—one oriented primarily toward crime control and public safety, the other toward protection of individual liberty and defense of individuals accused of crimes.
To be effective in addressing systemic issues, councils have to deal with the inherent tensions and conflicts arising from differing values and managerial perspectives of leaders who hold different institutional positions. Additionally, they need to address a number of other essentially internal structural and operational issues. Discussions with criminal justice coordinating council chairs and staff directors have helped to identify seven key internal challenges that any CJCC—whether long-established or newly created—most likely needs to address if it is to be effective in shaping criminal justice policy, funding support, and operations:

1. Establishing a clear mission and role. Whatever its other functions, a criminal justice coordinating council is fundamentally focused on a set of planning and problem-solving activities, supplemented by communications among key leaders regarding policy and programmatic options. Council activities logically include formulating policy goals for the local criminal justice system; collecting and analyzing data relevant to development of plans to achieve those goals; catalyzing policymakers’ discussion and decision-making regarding programmatic and operational plans designed to achieve the policy goals; and assessing the performance of justice system entities and the overall system in implementing the plans and moving toward the goals.

There are obvious issues regarding the authority of the council and the scope of its mission. If at all possible, it makes sense for the council’s mission to encompass a comprehensive scope of activities—i.e., addressing, at a minimum, the activities of all of the police, court, corrections, and public and private agencies directly involved in criminal justice system policymaking and operations in the jurisdiction. If, for example, a county-level CJCC focuses only on functions that are clearly the responsibility of county-funded agencies and does not take account of the activities of municipally-funded police departments, it will be ignoring a critical component of overall system operations.

It is also likely to be helpful for the council to have some type of formal authority to undertake data collection, planning, and coordination functions. Having formal legal authorization to function as a multi-agency and cross-jurisdictional planning and coordination body—whether from statute, county government ordinance or resolution, executive order, multi-governmental joint resolution adopted by the affected county and municipal governments—gives the CJCC legitimacy and a degree of independence that will be valuable in enabling it to address issues from a systemic perspective. Optimally, the authorizing legislation or resolution will set forth the purposes of the CJCC, its principal duties and powers, and the broad outlines of the relationship between the CJCC and the agencies and institutions with which it will work.

A criminal justice coordinating council is, by definition, focused primarily on policy, planning and coordination—not on operational activities. But in order to develop effective policies and plans, the council—through its members and its staff—must develop a good understanding
of the core operations and operational objectives of all of the system’s component parts. Optimally, the council will have a leadership role in establishing goals for the overall system, taking account of data on the crime problems and justice system management issues that face the jurisdiction. The council should have a mission statement, perhaps derived from the authorizing legislation or resolution that articulates its goals as a body and outlines its principal responsibilities. An example of a CJCC mission statement that has clearly articulated goals and responsibilities is that of Mecklenburg County in North Carolina:

“The Criminal Justice Advisory Group is committed to making a positive difference in the Mecklenburg County criminal justice system through communication, research, coordination, and planning. The group collaboratively develops programs and policies, and advocates change, in the interest of improving public safety.”

2. Developing a viable council structure. The formal structure of a criminal justice coordinating council—its membership, its relationship to general government, and its operating procedures or organizational ground rules—are key factors affecting a CJCC’s ability to function effectively and help shape justice system policies and practices. Often, the membership will be established by authorizing legislation or resolution, but there should be some flexibility to alter membership and procedures in light of changing circumstances.

While CJCCs have a wide variety of approaches to membership, those that seek to take a genuinely systemic approach to addressing criminal justice issues are often county/city collaborations—typically independent from direct control by either the county or city administrations but closely linked to general government through membership and liaison functions. As one CJCC leader noted, “one agency not on board affects the whole system.” The membership of such a council should optimally be broadly representative of both elected general government officials (e.g., county commissioners, mayors or city council members), elected and appointed criminal justice agency and court leaders, and leaders of non-justice agencies who have significant roles in criminal justice system operations. Optimally, the council will also have some “public citizen” members who have no involvement with any justice system entity but are interested in the broad goals of the council. Consideration should also be given to possible linkages with state justice system policymaking bodies, to take account of the desirability of two-way communication between local and state level policymakers.

The breadth of representation on such a council will help to bring a comprehensive system-wide perspective to the work of the CJCC. The involvement of general government officials will provide valuable linkage with budget-making and appropriations processes. The court and criminal justice agency leaders will form the core of the CJCC (and may make up a majority of an executive committee that is appreciably smaller than the broadly representative council) and will bring specialized knowledge about justice system operations and issues.

In addition to membership, key
structural issues for a CJCC include development of viable operating procedures (possibly including written by-laws; necessarily including procedures for developing agendas, holding CJCC meetings, and disseminating information about CJCC activities); formation of committees to address overall policies and development of specific programs that involve multiple entities; identification and selection of leaders (e.g., CJCC chairperson and vice-chair, chairs of specific committees); provision for budgetary support; and arrangements for staff support for council operations.

3. Developing and using staff capabilities to support CJCC planning and policy development. Robert Cushman, in his guide for developing CJCCs, observes that the staff support provided to a CJCC will depend upon the size of the jurisdiction and the resources available, and he is emphatic about the need for such support: “a CJCC will not work well unless it receives independent, full-time staff support.” As Cushman notes, planning for staffing needs should be preceded by careful consideration of CJCC objectives—i.e., the types of planning, analysis, and coordination activities that the staff will be expected to undertake.

While the mix of technical skills likely to be needed will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, staff members can be expected to need capabilities in three basic areas:

- Skills in collecting and analyzing data, and converting raw data into useful, policy-relevant information and policy or programmatic options;
- Practical experience in organizations and inter-organization collaboration, optimally including knowledge about and experience with justice system processes; and
- Political, managerial, and administrative skills that will enable them to interact effectively with CJCC members and officials at every level in the array of justice system and general government entities that have stakes in the work of the CJCC.

As a practical matter, many small rural jurisdictions are not likely to have the resources to enable employment of full-time staff members. In larger jurisdictions, however (or in multi-county consortiums formed by less populous counties) having an independent staff is feasible and highly desirable. Having a highly competent staff for the CJCC, neutral and independent of any single criminal justice entity, should enable the CJCC to function effectively in carrying out its roles of collecting and analyzing data, developing policy options and plans for implementing preferred options, fostering multi-agency collaboration, and assessing system performance.

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2 Ibid., p. 29.
4. Acquiring and using information about system operations. A broadly representative criminal justice coordinating council, working with competent staff (and, where appropriate, with independent researchers and other consultants), has the potential to acquire and use information about agency, court, and overall system operations. Optimally, the CJCC will develop ways to assess the performance of the system as a whole (and necessarily of its constituent parts) in light of it has set for system operation. One of the key internal challenges for a CJCC is how to develop the capacity for data collection, analysis, and system assessment while still maintaining the confidence and support of the justice system entities that form its core constituent group.

CJCCs in some jurisdictions are already collecting and analyzing information on agency and system operations and, to a lesser extent, assessing system performance in relation to goals that have been articulated. Thus, for example, Multnomah County, Oregon in 2011 was working on cost-benefit analysis, GIS Mapping, a Data Warehouse that allows access to information such as key indicators, and tracking offender streams. Multnomah leaders noted the importance of using various tools and expertise within the community. As one Multnomah councilmember put it, “it’s like trying to start a diet when you do not even have a working scale.” In Pinellas County, Florida, the coordinating council has partnered with a local university to build a data collaborative to gather annual datasets and perform analyses based on policy questions raised by council members. The collaborative houses data from justice system agencies, health and human services, as well as information about substance abuse treatment, mental health, Medicaid, and more. As part of a longer-term effort, the data collaborative will allow for the development of cross-system performance indicators and program evaluations.

Performance measurement is, inevitably, a sensitive area. Few leaders of an agency are likely to appreciate having the agency evaluated on the basis of criteria set by another body and through the use of information that may be developed independently of the agency. From a public perspective, however, it is important for CJCCs to develop the capacity to assess the performance of the overall system. For example, in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, each department is required to submit performance management data along with a budget. In Eau Claire, outcomes are used in funding decisions. As part of an effort to move to evidence-based decision making, the coordinating council in Eau Claire is working on developing a system-wide score card to link sentencing alternatives with each program’s performance measures and budgets. Through the process of developing a capacity for assessing system performance, CJCCs will necessarily learn much about the problems that affect system operations and about the performance of the entities involved in justice system operations.

Modern information and communications technology holds at least the potential—though it has so far not achieved the reality in very many places—of providing and enabling the sharing of
essential information about individuals, cases, and agency and system performance on a real time basis. It is common for the different organizational entities that make up the core of the system—police, prosecutors’ offices, courts, probation, and corrections—to have their own computer systems, developed for their own internal operating purposes and not designed to facilitate sharing of information with other entities.

CJCCs are in a unique position to provide a bridge across the “silo” systems, even if the technology is not yet in place to facilitate easy sharing of information. Thus, for example, in some jurisdictions, CJCC staff collects data independently from a variety of different agency and court sources, producing a monthly or quarterly consolidated report that provides an overview of overall system operations, including trends. Such reports can help policymakers overcome the silo structure that is characteristic of most criminal justice systems. The reports can provide “snapshot,” trend, and forecast data on factors such as number and types of arrests, number of cases filed and resolved, types of resolutions, time to resolution, and number of petitions to revoke probation that are filed and resolved. In Pinellas County, Florida the use of indicator reports are extremely helpful in decision making. In Hennepin County, Minnesota, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee has recently finished integrating the county’s justice system information system, and this has been an immense help in accessing and collecting information used in decision making.

The ability to produce such reports on trends in key indicators of system performance leads naturally to discussions about what types of data should be collected, and why—and, inevitably, to discussions of performance measurement. There is an old saying the “what you count counts”—when practices are scrutinized through collection and analysis of data, the practitioners pay attention to those practices and their impacts. There is little doubt that these consolidated reports are scrutinized with care by senior court and agency officials in the jurisdictions where they are produced. The practice of producing and utilizing such reports is still in its infancy, in relatively few jurisdictions and not yet fully developed as a tool for problem identification and systemic planning.

For jurisdictions where CJCCs are not yet producing such reports on system operations, the first challenge is to develop mechanisms for obtaining the data and putting the raw data into report formats that provide useful information to senior-level policymakers. Such reports, especially when viewed over time, can be invaluable for gauging progress, identifying systemic problems, and developing policies and programs to address the issues. For jurisdictions where such reports are in use, the next challenge is three-fold: (1) refining the key indicators, to strengthen their utility for problem identification and systemic planning; (2) putting in place technology that will enable very rapid sharing and analysis of data now generally obtained from an array of separate agency- and court-based computer systems; and (3) strengthening the capacity for analysis,
planning, and formulation of recommendations for resource allocation derived from analysis of the data.

5. **Fostering use of evidence-based practices in on-going operations.** Over the past two decades there has been a considerable amount of research on the factors that contribute to criminal re-offending and on processes and methods that the justice system can use to reduce the extent of re-offending. Recently, there has been increasing emphasis on the part of federal funding agencies and some local jurisdictions to incorporate findings from this body of research into day-to-day criminal justice practice and decision-making, from the point of initial police contact with a suspected offender through charging, the adjudication process, and post-conviction stages of criminal cases.3

CJCCs can have a significant role in encouraging the use of evidence-based practices on the part of the criminal justice agencies and courts that comprise its core membership. In particular, they can—with support from staff—take several steps to encourage movement toward use of practices shown by reliable research to be more effective than alternative approaches to particular situations. These include:

- Assembling information on evidence-based practices/evidence-based decision making at key points in the criminal justice process;
- Reviewing existing practices by comparison to what the research (when available) shows about alternative practices, and assessing the policy implications of the options;
- Considering the feasibility of adopting (at least on an experimental/pilot project basis) evidence-based practices;
- Where feasible, encouraging and supporting implementation of the evidence-based practices, with accompanying research to evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence-based alternative practice;
- Where there are indications that existing practices are not effective in achieving key goals but available evidence does not support specific alternatives, catalyzing collaborative design and implementation of action programs that involve new or revised practices to address the problems;
- Supporting evaluation research that will compare the effectiveness of new approaches with pre-existing practices.

The research that has led to identification of evidence-based practices that are effective in reducing recidivist behavior has focused primarily on practices followed by probation departments and community corrections agencies. However, the basic approach is relevant to all stages of the criminal justice process. A key challenge for CJCCs is to identify practices that may need revision and, when

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identified, take steps to gather research that compares the existing practices with promising alternatives, and begin systemic action planning to increase effectiveness.

6. **Catalyzing plans for system operations in the event of emergency.** There are a wide variety of emergencies that can put justice system agencies into a crisis mode—often without well-formed plans for how to respond. They include floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards, riots, flu pandemics, bomb threats, and, worse, actual bombings or similar human-caused catastrophes. Typically, when an event such as this takes place, some regularly used facilities are unavailable and all justice system entities (and their personnel) are placed under enormous stress. One obvious function of a CJCC is to bring justice system and general government leaders together to shape plans for dealing with such events.

Developing plans for handling emergencies such as these has a number of positive benefits. Most importantly, it establishes a plan for system operations that can be activated if an emergency strikes. There are a number of additional benefits:

- The planning process itself provides an example of collaborative problem identification and problem-solving that can carry over into other realms.
- The planning exercise will almost certainly highlight the value of having and analyzing data on system resources and operations, including information on:
  - System flows – the usual flows of paper and persons from one entity to another within the system
  - Facility and program capacities
  - Available court and agency resources
  - Communications capabilities and problems
  - Existing ability of system entities to share essential information; identification of Information sharing deficiencies and technology needs
  - Priorities, as seen by different agency and institution leaders
  - Back-up resources (facilities, computer systems, communications capabilities, etc.) that are currently in place, for use if existing resources become unavailable

- The planning process can focus on an approach to “triage” decision-making—what is most important to accomplish in an emergency, when time is critical and resources are limited; what is less important—an approach that can be helpful in future policy-making.
- The planning process is highly likely to highlight current and potential future problem areas, and thus focus attention on needs in these areas.
- The process can foster innovative ways of thinking about problems, including ways to share and act upon essential information in a timely fashion.
Developing the capacity to shape budgeting and resource allocation decisions in a neutral and credible fashion. Perhaps the most critical challenge for any CJCC is how to shape budgeting and resource allocation decisions in order to enable achievement of the goals for system improvement that have been set through CJCC planning and programmatic initiatives. The CJCC itself typically has no direct budgetary authority, but its members inevitably include powerful and influential local officials. In some places, the CJCC includes general government leaders who are not involved in day-to-day criminal justice operations, but whose views are relevant to the CJCC’s work.

Policymakers are naturally interested in the costs and benefits of alternative approaches to addressing recurrent problems. As the CJCC develops a capacity to collect data and either conduct or support research that includes credible cost-benefit analysis of specific policies and practices, it will almost certainly enhance its influence in the budgetary process.

If the CJCC is effective in its data collection, problem identification, planning, and program development work, the products of that work should be reflected in decisions made by general government officials about justice system priorities and in levels of funding. Circulating regular reports that provide an overview of system operations, highlighting progress and problems, provides a foundation for CJCCs to contribute constructively to the budgeting and resource allocation process.

A National Network for Information Exchange

To date, the staff and members of CJCCs have had little opportunity to learn about how various coordinating councils across the country tackle the many issues outlined above. In 2010, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, awarded a grant to the Justice Management Institute and its partners the Pretrial Justice Institute and the National Association of Counties to create a national network of CJCCs. The network initially brings together the staff and leadership of CJCCs from twelve diverse jurisdictions across the country to provide an opportunity for them to share materials, ideas, and problem-solve in an effort to improve criminal justice system planning in their individual jurisdictions and nationwide. The jurisdictions include:

- Coconino County, Arizona
- Sacramento, California
- Denver, Colorado
- Pinellas County, Florida
- Clinton County, Iowa
- Johnson County, Kansas
- Jefferson County, Kentucky
- Hennepin County, Minnesota
- Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
- Multnomah County, Oregon
- Charlottesville, Virginia
- Eau Claire, Wisconsin
In addition to the information exchange that will occur among the network members, there is much to be learned from these twelve jurisdictions, both in terms of new approaches to existing and emerging challenges as well as how they have dealt with changes during their organizational development. The network also allows for executive members, nearly all county-elected officials, to act as a political ally for a stakeholder who has legitimate concerns about public opinion and political fallout. For example, the peer-to-peer support offered from one elected prosecutor to another creates comfort and can bolster courage. As the network grows beyond the initial twelve members, this information will serve as a guide for other CJCCs nationally to help build even more capacity for criminal justice system planning and continue to increase the effectiveness of coordinating councils.